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# Guidance and Counseling

a position paper of  
the state board  
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*The Board of Education recognizes that providing good guidance and counseling services in the schools of the Commonwealth is a challenging and important task. The complex nature of the range of functions included under guidance and counseling deserves a clear definition. In the following position paper, the Board describes its view of what services should be provided for all Massachusetts students through guidance and counseling.*

*The position paper includes a statement of The Goals and Objectives for Guidance and Counseling and the qualities the Board of Education believes these services should have to be effective. The section on The Functions defines the five areas the Board encourages each local school district to provide in guidance and counseling services. In its Recommendations for School Districts, the Board has limited its suggestions to those which do not require additional expenditures. However, the Board believes that such activities will increase the range and enhance the quality of guidance and counseling services provided by local school districts.*

*This position paper represents a commitment by the Board of Education to the improvement of these important services throughout the Commonwealth. We encourage those who share our view that guidance and counseling services need to be given higher priority in Massachusetts to work with us to achieve that goal.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles T. Grigsby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a stylized "G".

Charles T. Grigsby

Chairperson

Massachusetts Board of Education



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May 7, 1978





# A POSITION PAPER: GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES IN MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## *"Recommendation I: The Counseling System*

*In a satisfactory school system the counseling should start in the elementary school, and there should be good articulation between the counseling in the junior and senior high schools . . . (and) between the counseling in the elementary school and the (secondary) school . . . There should be one full time counselor for every two hundred fifty to three hundred pupils in the high school. The counselors should have had experience as teachers but should be devoting virtually full time to the counseling work; they should be familiar with the use of tests and measurements of the aptitudes and achievements of pupils. The function of the counselor is not to supplant the parents but to supplement parental advice to a youngster. To this end, the counselor should be in close touch with the parent as well as the pupil . . ."*

*The American High School Today*  
James Bryant Conant 1959

The first recommendation in the late James Bryant Conant's landmark report on the American High School was for a strong counseling system. His recommendation is as valid in 1978 as it was in 1959.

The Board of Education wishes to state its position on the importance of guidance and counseling services for all Massachusetts students and the significance of these services in the overall educational program from elementary school through high school. The Board is concerned that inadequacies in guidance and counseling services persist in the Commonwealth and, in some instances, are worsening due to financial constraints.

It is precisely because of such constraints that the Board feels it is important to express its view that guidance and counseling services need to be given higher priority in Massachusetts. Public education in the Commonwealth is based on the individual, and is aimed at educational fulfillment of individual potential. Guidance and counseling services are essential to achieve this goal in a system of universal public education. The strength of such services is a keystone if we are to realize the full value of our total investment in public elementary and secondary education.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

In 1971, the Board of Education adopted ten *Educational Goals for Massachusetts* (Appendix). These goals define what individual learners should achieve from public school education. For this to be possible, the Board of Education believes the following is necessary:

1. That guidance and counseling services help students develop the ability to make carefully considered decisions and to increase their decision-making capacity on personal, social, career and educational matters.
2. That guidance and counseling services support parents in developing the understanding and skills necessary to help their children with educational and career choices.
3. That guidance and counseling services assist students and parents to widen the range of choices that they perceive students have about career and educational alternatives.
4. That guidance and counseling services assist students to strengthen their self-perception and understanding, and to knowledgeably seek services they may need.
5. That guidance and counseling services help students, parents, teachers, and administrators to deal with problems within the classroom and surrounding school environment that may impair a student's ability to take advantage of the school's educational opportunities or restrict a student's range of career choices.

For guidance and counseling services to be effective, it is the Board of Education's position that they should have the following qualities:

1. Guidance and counseling services should be the shared responsibility of not only professionally certified counselors\* but also parents, administrators, teachers, other school personnel, community resource persons and — where appropriate — other students. Guidance and counseling staff should be accountable to administrators for coordinating and directing such services within the school and with the student's family.
2. Guidance and counseling services should be provided to all students and should be available at the elementary as well as secondary levels.
3. Guidance and counseling services should actively involve parents throughout the public school years. Such services should supplement and support the parental guidance and counseling role, not supplant it.



4. Guidance and counseling services should organize and draw upon community resources, especially in career counseling. Business, industry, labor, and agency personnel are invaluable resources in aiding students and parents in shaping educational and career choices.
5. Guidance and counseling services should include assistance with the initial job placement of students not going on to post-secondary education. Job placement should receive as high a priority as college placement traditionally has received in guidance and counseling services.
6. Guidance and counseling services should take a leadership role in the elimination of sex stereotyping, racial or ethnic bias, and labeling within the school environment which create barriers to individual fulfillment and equity. Students should be helped to recognize that such barriers may confront them beyond the school and to develop skills to overcome these barriers.
7. Guidance and counseling services should aim at broadening the educational and career options available to each student. Testing should be carefully planned so that results are properly used and interpreted to assist students and parents in decision-making, along with other information which also should be considered in such decision-making.
8. Guidance and counseling services should provide students and parents with accurate and up-to-date information necessary for educational and career decisions. This information should be organized, readily accessible, understandable, and regularly reviewed to assure that it is current. While technology should be used for conveying information efficiently, it is not a substitute for personalized guidance and counseling.

# THE FUNCTIONS OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

The Board considers the following five functions as the range of guidance and counseling services that should be provided by each local school district: (1) personal counseling; (2) educational and career counseling; (3) consultation; (4) appraisal and (5) referral. All five functions should begin at the elementary level and continue through middle or junior high school to high school. The performance of a particular counseling function may vary from the elementary to the secondary level, but the function itself should be continuous throughout the school years.

Variations in the performance of the guidance and counseling functions should also exist where low income and minority populations are concerned. Issues of poverty, race, and ethnicity make the fulfillment of guidance and counseling goals both more challenging and more important because of the significance of education to the life chances of such students. In order to carry on these functions effectively, additional resources and specific skills may well be required. It is important that administrators, teachers and counselors provide role models with which all students, including minority students, can identify. The counseling staff, therefore, should reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the school's enrollment.

## Personal Counseling

The personal counseling function, which is basic to all other guidance and counseling functions, is establishing relationships of trust and understanding with students as individuals in order to encourage their development of positive self-image and decision-making skills. Personal counseling should be accomplished through both an organized system for offering support to students, and in a spontaneous, informal manner so that students can approach counselors for assistance with personal and general problems affecting their educational opportunities.

Personal counseling should be used to promote positive relationships between students, parents and teachers when problems arise which can affect learning. The counselor should give full consideration and fair treatment to all parties — the student, the parents, and the teacher — while assisting the student, parents and teacher in working out solutions to these problems.

Personal counseling is often used in response to a deteriorating personal problem or classroom difficulties. As such, it can be seen as crisis-oriented and reactive in nature. However, personal counseling should also be preventive. It can assist teachers and administrators in learning to recognize certain behavioral signs so that assistance can be given to students before problems emerge."

Personal counseling should provide information and education to students to help them anticipate the stresses of growing up, including programs for the prevention and treatment of alcohol and drug abuse. Personal counseling also should help students learn how to recognize problems at an

early stage. Such a preventive approach should include specific programs directed at potential dropouts. Because this function is so personal, the confidentiality of communication between student and counselor should be respected and protected.

## **Educational and Career Counseling**

Educational and career counseling is to help students identify their own skills, competencies, values and preferences. In the process of educational and career counseling, students should expand their own self-awareness, establish a base of information about career alternatives, and acquire knowledge of educational programs and their relationship to future career possibilities.

The Board is purposely linking educational with career counseling because it sees them as going hand-in-hand. Career counseling should provide all students, both college and non-college bound, with assistance in formulating and pursuing career goals. Consideration of educational alternatives should accompany exploring career goals.

The Board wishes to stress its concern that students planning to move immediately into the job market upon completing high school be given as much counseling attention as college bound

students. This attention should include assistance with initial job placement of students.

The manner in which the counselor approaches educational and career counseling can be of paramount importance. It has been the practice in some schools, for instance, to wait until the high school years to schedule each student for a once-a-year meeting with a counselor to discuss the subject of a student's future career plans. This approach is rarely helpful to the student and not an economical use of a counselor's time and skills.

Educational and career counseling should begin at the elementary level giving students an understanding of the nature of work and a basic awareness of career and life opportunities. It is especially important to inform and involve parents in this process. Parents and other community residents can also be involved by being invited to the classroom to talk about their occupations. Certainly educational and career counseling should be done incrementally so that it is not a new issue at the high school level. The key to successful counseling is to have it begin in elementary schools, in collaboration with classroom teachers.

Many activities should exist at each school level to widen the student's knowledge of careers and post-secondary education. Speakers from various businesses, industries, and professions, including those in what have been non-traditional careers for both women and men, should be invited to schools to talk about their work with students who want to listen and discuss. Career counseling should ensure that racial or sexual stereotyping and discrimination are not practiced. Local industry-education-labor councils can be particularly helpful in organizing and promoting career counseling programs.



Group techniques can be an especially useful tool in career and educational counseling. More students can be reached at one time with basic information. Groups can be skillfully used not only to share information but to air questions and surface self-doubts. Students can help each other recognize their strengths and limitations and then move forward with greater confidence toward setting their own individual educational and career goals.

Students should be provided with opportunities to gain work experience. Work study, cooperative education and internships should be integral parts of the career and educational counseling experience. These opportunities should be accessible not only for those with direct vocational interests or those in occupational education programs but for all students interested in gaining from such experience. Administrators should lead the way at the local school level in encouraging these opportunities to become part of each student's school experience.

Technology, such as computerized information systems and career resource centers, is an important back-up to the personal attention that counselors give to students who are seeking to identify the aptitudes and skills that will define their future education or work. Technology should not be seen as sufficiently explanatory or stimulating to offer adequate career and educational counseling by itself. It must always be used in conjunction with personal interactions between counselor and student.

## Consultation

The consultation function is to help others who have primary responsibilities for students — such as parents, teachers and administrators — to perform those primary roles better. Counselors should offer information, training and guidance to others, rather than try to take their place or play their role. The counselor should assist others to recognize their own skills, knowledge and authority — be they parent, teacher, administrator, or others. The counselor should know how to coordinate and integrate the efforts of other professionals and non-professionals in educating young people.

Consultation includes both assisting with student problems and providing information to teachers and administrators which has implications for the curriculum and instructional practices of the school. Good guidance and counseling services frequently can provide valuable insight into how the educational programs of a school ought to be modified.

## Appraisal

The appraisal function is to help students realistically examine their potential abilities and achievements without impressing upon them a negative opinion of themselves. Appraisal, i.e., aptitude, interest, and achievement testing, should present clear unbiased findings. It should diagnosis areas of strength as well as deficiencies or problems. It should always provide clear, unbiased interpretation of data.

Counselors should be responsible for the screening of tests for bias and for assuring proper usage. They should see that the misuse or misinterpretation of tests does not occur. When tests are administered, counselors should assure that students and parents receive an accurate explanation of the test's purpose and significance.

Counselors should be responsible for the sensitive communication of test results to students, parents, teachers and administrators authorized to have access to student records. Sensitive communication means that tests should be placed in a proper context which provides students with an understanding of their own potential and accomplishments. Decisions, for example, should not be based exclusively upon a given test result. Decisions should be based upon assessing test results in the context of other information about a student — such as performance in school, grades, personal goals, after school activities and jobs.

Appraisals may yield information of value to administrators and teachers in evaluating the curriculum and instructional practices of a school. Counselors should organize and present findings from tests which indicate strengths and weaknesses of the instructional program.

## Referral

The referral function should provide students with access to a wide variety of services not normally found in the classroom or school services. Referrals should be based upon knowledge of available community human service resources and of the individual needs of a student. The school district should develop and have access to a network of referral resources which can help students and their families with problems which can affect the educational opportunities of the student. These resources might include psychotherapy, family counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, psychological testing, alternative schools, residential treatment and occupational training.

A referral must be done carefully to be successful. This entails forming a relationship with both the student and his or her family. The reason for the referral should be made clear to all parties. What the student and parents should expect from the referral should also be clarified. Trust should be built into the referral process by the counselor's understanding the process and explanation of the process to the student and his or her family.

Referral is an essential part of the counselor role. Referral should not be the termination of a relationship with the student and parents. The student and family should understand that their case is not closed if they wish additional assistance. Communication between the person who initiated the referral and the counselor should continue. Follow-up is a crucial aspect of referral.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Board of Education recognizes the fiscal constraints facing education at the local and state levels. Nevertheless, it urges that higher priority be given guidance and counseling services within those constraints because of the importance of guidance and counseling to the achievement of all educational goals. The Board of Education is limiting its specific recommendations to those which do not require additional expenditures:

- School committees and superintendents are encouraged to appoint local guidance and counseling advisory committees to assess at least annually and report publicly to the school committee and superintendent on the status of guidance and counseling services in the district. These advisory committees should be representative of the community at large and include parents, teachers, students, administrators, and employers. This annual assessment should include the five functions of guidance and counseling contained in this position paper at both the elementary and secondary school levels.
- School committees and superintendents are encouraged to appoint community career counseling resources committees to increase the utilization of community resource personnel from business, industry, labor and agencies for educational and career counseling in the schools. Such committees already exist in

many school districts under a variety of titles and have proven a valuable aid in conducting career exploratory programs, advising on the appropriateness of vocational and occupational education curriculum and equipment, and in supporting career counseling activities in collaboration with school personnel.

- Superintendents and principals are encouraged to initiate and/or expand career exploratory programs at the elementary level and work experience/cooperative education programs at the secondary level as a means for expanding knowledge about and interest in a broad range of career options for students.
- Principals and counselors are encouraged to utilize a wider range of counseling techniques, including but not limited to group counseling and peer counseling for appropriate purposes, in order to better utilize counselor time and talents to increase services to students. Principals and counselors also are urged to review assignments presently given counselors to see if greater efficiency can be achieved in using counselor resources. Particular attention should be given to how guidance and counseling services are organized to promote continuity and personalization of such services for students and parents. The use of paraprofessional and clerical personnel for duties not requiring a certified counselor also should be examined.

# STRENGTHENING DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUPPORT FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

Within the limits of state and federal funding for these purposes, the Department of Education will strengthen its support for guidance and counseling in the following areas:

- **Accountability**

The Bureau of Student Services in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction is designated by the Board to be the center for leadership of guidance and counseling services in the Department of Education. This Bureau will be responsible for coordinating with other bureaus of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, and with the Divisions of Occupational Education and Special Education and the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity on all programs and policies affecting guidance and counseling services.

- **Policy**

This *Position Paper on Guidance and Counseling Services in Massachusetts Public Schools* will provide guidelines for Department programs and regulations affecting guidelines and counseling services.

- **Dissemination**

Model guidance and counseling services will be identified and disseminated in publications of the Department and in a handbook.

- **In-Service Education**

The Bureau of Student Services, in collaboration with regional center directors, will organize and conduct regional workshops on guidance and counseling services in cooperation with appropriate professional associations.

- **Technical Assistance**

Department personnel and/or consultants will be available to assist school districts implementing the Board of Education's recommendations contained in this Position Paper.

- **Funding**

Within the limits of appropriations and fiscal regulations, state and federal discretionary funds will be used to encourage implementation of model guidance and counseling services.

- **Certification**

The Advisory Commission on Educational Personnel is preparing recommendations for the certification of guidance counselors and other pupil personnel specialists, and for the approval of graduate programs in these fields. The Board will review these recommendations in the light of this Position Paper.

## CONCLUSION

The Board of Education wishes to express its gratitude to the regional education councils, to the *ad hoc* advisory committee on guidance and counseling, and to all those who participated in the regional forums or who communicated with the Board and its staff regarding early drafts of this Position Paper. These views were invaluable in shaping our thoughts and the final version of this document.

Like good teaching, good guidance and counseling can have a lifelong effect upon an individual student. It also influences in important

ways the views parents have of their child's school. James Bryant Conant recognized the importance of the counseling system in American education. We have much to be proud of in Massachusetts, but we have a distance to go in achieving statewide the goal that Dr. Conant set in *The American High School Today*.

It is the Board of Education's hope that this Position Paper will help and encourage those who — like the Board — feel that the Conant goal is important to the educational opportunities of all children in the Commonwealth.

# **APPENDIX A EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR MASSACHUSETTS\***

## **Physical and Emotional Well-Being**

Education should contribute to the learner's physical and emotional well-being, especially to a sense of personal worth and to a capacity for influencing one's own destiny.

## **Basic Communications Skills**

Education should develop in each learner the basic skills needed for communication, perception, evaluation and conceptualization of ideas. Among the most important are reading, writing, speaking, listening, visual and computational skills.

## **Effective Uses of Knowledge**

Education should provide for each learner access to man's cultural heritage, stimulate intellectual curiosity, and promote intellectual development.

**\*EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR  
MASSACHUSETTS**, The Commonwealth of  
Massachusetts, Board of Education, September,  
1971.

## **Capacity and Desire for Lifelong Learning**

Education should foster and stimulate in each learner the natural desire for lifelong learning and should develop the skills necessary to fulfill that desire.

## **Citizenship in a Democratic Society**

Education should provide each learner with a knowledge and understanding of how our society functions in theory and in practice; education must also foster individual commitment to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and to protect the right of others.

## **Respect for the Community of Man**

Education should provide each learner with knowledge and experience which contribute to an understanding of human similarities and differences and which advance mutual respect for humanity and for the dignity of the individual.

## **Occupational Competence**

Education should provide the learner with the skills, experiences and attitudes, and



the guidance for initial job placement; it is equally important for the learner to develop a capacity to adapt to changing conditions.

### **Understanding the Environment**

Education should provide each learner with knowledge and understanding of the social, physical, and biological worlds and the balance between man and his environment and should develop attitudes and behavior leading to intelligent uses of the environment.

### **Individual Values and Attitudes**

Education should expand and advance the humane dimensions of all learners, especially by helping them to identify and cultivate their own spiritual, moral, and ethical values and attitudes.

### **Creative Interests and Talents**

Education should provide each learner with varied opportunities to nurture interests, to discover and to develop natural talents, and to express values and feelings through various media.





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